62. A family's *padi pun* may never be sold or given away, and to it there are attached a series of ritual prohibitions, or *pemali*. In many cases, for example, it is taboo to enter a farm after having previously (i.e. on the same day) touched or eaten pork. To break such a *pemali* is to offend the *padi* spirits, and run the risk of their being frightened away; offenders are heavily penalized, the fine exacted from them laid at the foot of the growing *padi*, a cock sacrificed in expiation, and prayers of atonement uttered. These *pemali* apply to all the members of a long-house and to strangers as well; ignorance of their nature affords no excuse, and, although transgression may have been entirely inadvertent, the penalties still operate. Every *bilek* family has its own particular set of prohibitions; often they may be ten or more in number, and there is wide variation from family to family. In carrying out my field research it was always necessary to ascertain well in advance the *pemali* of any farm which I proposed visiting, and then to modify my diet and behaviour in the manner required.

63. I was made aware of the extraordinary strength of Iban belief in their *padi* cult a few months after my arrival in the Sut. I had brought with me the equipment necessary to carry out a simple plane-table survey, so that accurate measurements of farm land could be obtained. In the course of a discussion with a specially arranged meeting of senior members of the long-house, I put forward my research proposals. In general they were acceded to with alacrity (and throughout the whole of my period of research I was accorded remarkable co-operation and helpfulness), but to the suggestion that I should survey farm land, there was immediate and hostile opposition. It was said that once before a survey party had visited the Baleh, and that in ensuing years, there had been disastrously bad harvests; the *padi* spirits, disturbed by the brusque ways of the surveyors, had taken offence and fled. From the emotion which accompanied its expression, it was clear that this was a fervently held opinion, but accurate survey was an important part of my work and I had gone to considerable trouble in bringing equipment all the way from England; I at once set about doing all I could to combat the idea that it was harmful. I employed arguments of many kinds. My research, I said, was aimed at helping the Iban, at finding ways to improve their crops; in other parts of Sarawak most bountiful harvests had followed extensive surveying; they were mistaken in thinking that the *padi* spirits, who belonged to the Iban, could take offence at the actions of a European, whose *adat* was entirely different, but I would be glad to perform sacrificial rites before embarking on my work, and I would observe all other *pemali* with scrupulous care. But my audience was adamant. By this time the discussion had been going on for about two hours, and realizing that further attempts at persuasion would be futile, I resorted to sterner arguments. My research, I reiterated, was intended to help the Iban, they must trust the Government; Government knew best in saying that their land should be surveyed. But this slight threat of coercion provoked a fierce reaction. His eyes flaming and his voice suffused with emotion, Nyala—the *tuai rumah*—averred that the Government could shoot them and burn down their long-houses, but they would not submit to having their *padi* farms surveyed. The others present sprang to his support, and for several minutes there was a babble of disturbed voices. If I were not to jeopardize the whole of my research, retreat was imperative; I was compelled to disavow my plans, and apologize for my effrontery.[1]

[1] It is interesting to note that Izikowitz encountered similar difficulties when doing field research among the Lamet (of French Indo-China), who practice shifting cultivation, and have a *padi* cult closely resembling that of the Iban. He describes how he attempted to map farm land, but the Lamet were very suspicious, and when he was setting up a pole to use as a measuring point in triangulation, there were loud protests that harm would result to "the

4: Roth E-4 (no date) 1891 OC6 Iban OC6

584 next day. If a woman orders a man to be off he must do as he is required. If he continue to stay when requested to retire, she gets out of bed and blows up the fire which is smouldering on the hearth, for all this goes on in a room where the parents are sleeping, and often also married brothers and sisters; but no one interferes. He is now sure to go, as he would not care to be seen. If a girl cares for a man she will let him know, if not, no amount of money can win her.

836 Of course immorality does ensue from this practice, but when it does occur it forms the exception and not the rule, and I believe you would not find in England a morality half as good amongst an equal number of persons. The custom does away, however, with much of the organised immorality of more civilized communities, and helps a man to a wife, and a woman to a husband, by affording them an opportunity of becoming acquainted with one another.

836 564 Even when a woman has so far forgotten herself as to submit to the desire of a man, it is as often as not simply to see whether their union would be fruitful, and if this prove to be the case, the man is bound in honour and by promise to make her his wife.

834 [152] 762 684 582 The women are so keenly sensitive to disgrace, that they will not part with their virtue for fear of the consequences. They prefer death to a life of shame, and many girls have committed suicide rather than face the displeasure of their parents and the jibes of their sex. If the man be false to his word, and the woman commits suicide, he is held responsible for the value of her life, and is very heavily fined. It is unusual, however, for the men to prove false to their vows. It is absolutely necessary for them to marry as early in life as possible, and if a suitable woman is already found, and her fertility ascertained beyond a doubt, there is no inducement to hang back. The young men as a rule marry at 18, and settle down, and the girls at 16.

584 [431] Presents given to a girl during courtship can never be recovered whatever the event.

Match-making parents sometimes invite a likely young lad of their acquaintance to *ngaiap* (as it is called) their daughter while both are yet young; they do all they can to render his visits agreeable to him in the hope that he may learn to get fond of the girl and take her to wife when they are both old enough to think of such matters. When the young man has made sure of his bride, he asks the important question of the parents. Should they be willing the day is fixed, and all in the 585 house are invited to eat *pudang sirih*. Should the young man live in another house the women in the house dress themselves

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

765 178 Government, it is very seldom that this observance can be carried out according to ancient custom; now they have either to dispense with the newly-procured human head or omit the observance altogether.

765 152 The dead man is not forgotten. Periodical mournings (*sabak*) at intervals of two or three months are held in his memory, and the professional wailer calls on the dead man and weeps over him. The relatives work themselves up into a frenzy of sorrow on these occasions, and many of them are often seen weeping sadly. The Dyaks believe [775] that the dead hear their cries, and that a bond of sympathy unites them with those on earth.

769 765 A year or two after the death the *Gawai Antu* is held. This feast is held in honour of all those that have died since the last *Gawai Antu* was held. Small, curiously-shaped baskets, supposed to represent the different implements a man or woman uses in work when alive, are made and placed on the different graves. Thus they furnish the dead with the means of livelihood in Hades. This feast ends all mourning for the dead, and after it has been held there are no more periodical mournings.

775 But even after all mourning has ceased the Dyak still believes that his dead friends and relatives live and visit [726] the earth. Before going forth on an expedition against the enemy, the dead are invoked, and are begged to help their friends on earth, so that they may be successful against their foes. In times of peril and of need the dead [787] are called upon; and on the hilltops or in the solitudes of the jungle a man often goes by himself and spends the night in the hope that the spirit of some dead relative may visit him, and in a dream tell him of some charm by means of which he may overcome difficulties and become rich and great.

11:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

323 Chinese make, and into this was stirred somewhat over half a gallon of pounded *samak* bark. After the bark had been allowed to soak for ten minutes or so Runin took the bark handful by handful, squeezing it in her hands, so expressing from it all the liquid she could. (Plate 13). The tempering fluid soon became a rich, dark brown in colour.

Meanwhile, the fire was blazing fiercely. After about forty minutes it began to settle and the pots to sink down into the ashes under the weight of the wood still resting upon them. It was now at its highest temperature, and all of the pots had reached a glowing red heat. All breakage had ceased. Fifteen minutes later the last of the wood above the pots had burnt away, and they lay exposed in the embers. (Plate 14). At 12.20 a.m. (just exactly one hour after the lighting of the fire) Runin removed the first of the pots by lifting it on the end of a stick (about a yard in length), carried it across an intervening space, and sank it into the tempering fluid which she had prepared. (Plate 15). The pot was still very hot and as it was immersed the fluid sizzled and spluttered and gave off clouds of steam. At the time of this first immersion we observed that the tempering fluid permeated right through the sides of the pot, and it is this—so the Iban claim—that helps to make their *priok* impermeable to water.

After about twenty-five seconds in the tempering fluid the pot was removed and placed on the earth nearby. Then, again on the end of the same stick, it was returned to the fire to dry, being turned in the ashes for about one minute. (Plate 16). With this the process of manufacture was at an end.

* * *

The firing I have just described could not be called a success. Of the five pots only one had come through unscathed. The four others had all suffered and in the same way: while the bodies were free from defects the lips and necks (as can be seen in Plate 16) had broken away badly. All four were only fit for throwing away.

323 It is perhaps of interest to consider the reasons advanced by the Iban themselves for the breakages that had occurred. Runin ●152 was greatly upset by what had happened, and she enjoined all 811 those present to keep their silence lest the story of what had

11:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

happened should spread throughout the long-house bringing her shame (*malu*). The breakages—as soon as she could bring herself to speak of the matter—she vehemently attributed to the poor quality of the clay (*tanah jai*, lit., bad clay) from which she had modelled the pots. Punai (from the neighbouring *bilek*) suggested that the pots had been dried for too long (i.e. above Runin's hearth) before firing. Irin (Runin's sister-in-law) and Bagop (the son of Runin's deceased sister) were both of the opinion that someone must have emitted wind, while the clay was being collected; they added that even if this had happened without audible noise it was still enough to cause breakages during firing. Runin immediately took up this theory and developed it: the deposit of clay in question, being directly opposite the long-house, was much used; beyond doubt, she argued, many others must have emitted wind while gathering it, and so the deposit as a whole had become tainted and worthless. With clay gathered from further inland (near her *padi* farm), which had not been put to such promiscuous use Runin went on, she had never had any failures. ("*Enda kala suba*," she averred, "Never before has this kind of thing happened").

Here (it may be noted in passing) we have a good example of the way in which the Iban system of magical prohibitions, or *pemali*, is used to account for and explain technical and human shortcomings. The bursting of the pots (to take the example at hand) is seen as evidence of the validity of the taboo, and on the presumption that the taboo has been broken the individual to whose activities it refers is absolved from blame. In this way a system of magical prohibitions performs an important social function, for by attributing blameworthy actions to mystical agency the individuals who have committed them are freed from responsibility, discord is avoided and the composure of the group preserved.

Her self-esteem restored, Runin went on to remark that, in general, breakages during firing were rare. Just how accurate this claim is I am unable definitely to say, for during my stay in Sarawak I did not witness another firing of pots. However, my impression, from the enquiries and observations that I did make, is that with the Iban technique of firing breakages must be not uncommon.

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602 As we have noted about three-quarters of the bilik-families of Rumah Nyala are related through cognatic ties. Within the community, members identify more closely and participate more frequently in activities with kinsmen than with non-kinsmen, intensity of identification and frequency of interaction being almost proportionate to degree of kinship. Thus, kinsmen take pride or shame from one another's actions and achievements. For example, when the community began the new longhouse in 1956, Apai Gaun urged his brother, Machau, to join him in collecting materials (ramu') for the construction of units in the new house.

> "I told him," said Apai Gaun, "that our family had never lived in a pelaboh and that I didn't intend to now. I told him that if he couldn't afford to have a carpenter put up his section, and he didn't know how, that I would help him, because I had worked as a carpenter. He didn't want to, so he built a pelaboh and I attached my section to the longhouse."

[152] Apai Gaun admitted that he felt rather ashamed because his brother had not built onto the longhouse, the implication being the Machau's failure to do so was a loss of face to Apai Gaun as well as to himself.

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476 Rice cultivation is both a cooperative and a competitive activity. For families with an insufficient labor force, recruitment of members from other families in either labor-exchange (bedurok) or for wages (ngaji) is imperative. Festive events throughout the farming year are held cooperatively, such as the Gawai Batu and Ngemali Umai. But rice cultivation also is highly competitive. When families decide upon the size of their farm, they consider not only their needs, the amount and quality of land to be

152 The fear of shame or embarrassment (malu) is a powerful motivation among the Iban. One of the most serious offenses that can be perpertrated against an Iban is to embarrass him and similarly, embarrassing appearances 177 and situations are to be eschewed by all means possible. Thus, personal pride and a fear of shame is one factor which motivates many Ibans to [535] identify with and emulate members of other groups and their fashions. In some communities the traditional styles of dance (ngajat) are passing, and in the evenings young people practice rumba, tuis ("twist") and konga ("conga").

[183] [152] While fear of ridicule and shame have contributed to the acculturation of some Ibans to the values of other groups, at the same time the possibility of rewards also has been a powerful factor. We have discussed the reasons behind the clamor for education and schools as a means to employment. We now will consider the entrance of thousands of Ibans into Christian churches as an example of the norms of mobility and opportunism under discussion.

175 797 Although the Roman Catholic Church has been established in the Third Division for more than a century, until recently its work has been limited primarily to the pasars and the growth of Iban constituents restricted accordingly. Despite the establishment of the Methodist Church in the Third Division by the first Foochow settlers, the entrance of Ibans into the Methodist Church began only after the Second World War. In 1949, a group of 32 Ibans, among them Tan Sri Temenggong Jugah, Pengarah Sibat anak Semada, and Pengulu Jinggut, three of the most powerful leaders in

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

159 to school, she was given a work scholarship to the Methodist Secondary
167 School, Kapit, and lived in the Girls' Hostel. Her experiences away
177 from home were rewarding in the friendships that she made, particularly with the hostel mother. During the school holidays in her first year, she returned to her longhouse to help tap rubber and with farm work.

> "When the illipe nuts were in season I gathered as many as possible. I worked hard for I realised how much I was indebted to the family who had raised and cared for me. At the same time I realized how much I had suffered at their hands. . .For the past few holidays, I haven't gone back to my foster-parents because they haven't care whether I returned or not."

In 1969, Berin took the Sarawak Junior Examination and failed it. When the opportunity appeared for her to enter a private school in Sibu, [152] she accepted. Again, she became very close to the hostel mother though her relations with her peers were strained and complicated by unresolved conflicts towards her mothers[24] and herself.

> "I met (the hostel mother) here and she has become my friend so that I don't have any more longings to go back to my mother who gave me birth."

During her second year in the private school in Sibu, she met a member of the security forces to whom she was attracted. He in turn was attentive to her, taking her on dates, giving her presents and a fun-time

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[24] In relating her life history, Berin made several remarks about her desire to "return to the mother of my birth." It is significant that the only adult male figure to appear in her account is her uncle.